STAR TREK™
ADVENTURES

THE GRAVITY OF THE CRIME

CHRISTOPHER L. BENNETT

CREDITS

051426

010670

020420

AUX SYS

SYSTEM DESIGN
NATHAN DOWDELL

LINE DEVELOPER
SAM WEBB

LINE EDITOR
JIM JOHNSON

WRITING
CHRISTOPHER L. BENNETT

EDITING
JIM JOHNSON

PROOFREADING
ARIC WIEDER AND JIM JOHNSON

COVER DESIGN
RICHARD L. GALE

GRAPHIC DESIGN
MATTHEW COMBEN

LAYOUT
THOMAS DEENY

PRODUCED BY
CHRIS BIRCH

OPERATIONS MANAGER
GARRY HARPER

PRODUCTION MANAGER
STEVE DALDRY

COMMUNITY SUPPORT
LLOYD GYAN

PUBLISHING ASSISTANT
SALWA AZAR

FOR CBS STUDIOS
BILL BURKE, JOHN VAN CITTERS, MARIAN CORDRY, VERONICA HART, BRIAN LADY, AND KEITH LOWENADLER

MODIPHIUS ENTERTAINMENT™
2d20™

Published by Modiphius Entertainment Ltd.
2nd Floor, 39 Harwood Road, London, SW6 4QP, U.K.

INFO@MODIPHIUS.COM
WWW.MODIPHIUS.COM
STARTREK.COM

Modiphius Entertainment Product Number
MUH051429-PDF

The 2d20 system and Modiphius Logos are copyright Modiphius Entertainment Ltd 2018. All 2d20 system text is copyright Modiphius Entertainment Ltd. Any unauthorized use of copyrighted material is illegal. Any trademarked names are used in a fictional manner; no infringement is intended. This is a work of fiction. Any similarity with actual people and events, past or present, is purely coincidental and unintentional except for those people and events described in an historical context. TM & © 2018 CBS Studios Inc. © 2018 Paramount Pictures Corp. STAR TREK and related marks and logos are trademarks of CBS Studios Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Artwork and graphics © and ™ CBS Studios Inc. All Rights Reserved., except the Modiphius Logo which is Modiphius Entertainment Ltd. This is a work of fiction. Any similarity with actual people and events, past or present, is purely coincidental and unintentional except for those people and events described in an historical context.

CHAPTER 01.00

THE GRAVITY OF THE CRIME

BY CHRISTOPHER L. BENNETT

082397
050670081302030806

01.10	SYNOPSIS	2
01.20	ACT 1: WITNESSES AND SUSPECTS	3
01.30	ACT 2: LEGWORK	9
01.40	ACT 3: CLOSING THE CASE	16
01.50	CONCLUSION	18

CHAPTER 01.10

THE GRAVITY OF THE CRIME

SYNOPSIS

The Players go undercover on the pre-contact planet Kalmur to investigate the apparent death of a Federation observation team member. That team has been observing a Kalmuri experiment in artificial gravity, potentially leading to warp drive within decades. But the experimental gravity generator ran wild and crushed everyone in the lab, including a Starfleet scientist, Lieutenant Li, who'd infiltrated the project as an observer.

While investigating, the crew is confronted by a Kalmuri detective, Lanox, who's convinced the deaths are the result of sabotage. But the sabotage could only have been performed from within the lab while the generator was running, and no one could have gotten out alive in time. Lanox has deduced that Li was an alien in disguise and recognizes the crew as more aliens, suspecting that they may have used advanced technology to commit the impossible locked-room murder. She says that if they want to convince her of their innocence, they must help her solve the case using their advanced knowledge.

Aiding in the investigation could violate the Prime Directive – but the crew's preliminary scans of the remains reveal a dearth of human DNA, suggesting that Li may be alive, possibly a captive of the killer. They must investigate in order to find him.

DIRECTIVES

In addition to the Prime Directive, the Directives for this mission are:

- Investigate the loss of Lieutenant Li
- Assess the methods and morale of Doctor Gur's observation team

The Gamemaster begins this mission with 2 points of Threat for each Player Character in the group.

ADAPTING THIS MISSION TO OTHER ERAS

This mission can be easily adapted to any era in which the Prime Directive is in effect, whether the Original Series (2260s), classic films (2270s-90s), or *The Next Generation* (2360s). However, there are some subtle differences in the application of the Prime Directive in the different eras. Starfleet officers of the 23rd century, who routinely operated out of contact with Starfleet Command and thus were entrusted with the authority and latitude to interpret regulations for themselves, tended to be more flexible in adapting the Directive for specific situations. However, 24th-century personnel, who tended to be in more regular contact with their superiors back home, were inclined to follow the letter of the law more rigorously. If Players keep this in mind, this could affect their choice of how to respond to Inspector Lanox's ultimatum.

Also, the use of warp drive as the crucial qualification for first contact was not yet clearly delineated in the 23rd century. Thus, a group of Players in a 23rd-century setting might be open to deciding that Kalmur is already advanced enough for formal first contact. The decision here might be more a matter of the Players' own judgment rather than formal regulations, potentially making for a more interesting debate.

In the *Star Trek: Enterprise* era, the Prime Directive had not yet been established by Earth Starfleet, although a similar non-interference policy was used by Vulcan High Command. Thus, Players in that era might not be concerned with avoiding interference. Also, first contact with the Catullans might not have occurred yet. In this setting, change the Starfleet team led by Dr. Gur into a Vulcan Science Directorate team led by the Vulcan Dr. T'Gur, with Ricardo Li as an Earth scientist participating in an exchange program. Have the pressure to avoid interference come from T'Gur and T'Zheen (making sure to avoid the phrase "Prime Directive"), and give Players the option to disregard their recommendations without penalty, for the choice to interfere would not violate any existing Starfleet regulation. Also, increase the Difficulty of tricorder-based detection Tasks by 1, since 22nd-century "scanners" were less powerful.

CHAPTER 01.20

THE GRAVITY OF THE CRIME

ACT 1: WITNESSES AND SUSPECTS

SCENE 1: MEETING THE OBSERVATION TEAM

An away team transports down to Kalmur, wearing prosthetic disguises to pass as natives. Kalmuri have skin tones ranging from dark bronze to light gold, and their scalps, foreheads, necks, and the backs of their hands and arms are covered in thick fur ranging from dark brown to pale gold. They have slightly protruding muzzles and their ears are moderately large and somewhat foxlike. (Players with non-humanoid characters should sit this one out or use Supporting Characters.) Kalmuri also have night vision and somewhat greater strength than humans. Their civilization is roughly parallel to Earth in the 2030s.

The away team arrives in the Federation observers' base, a holographically shielded monitoring station hidden in the hills on the outskirts of the Kalmuri city Aphios (capital of the nation-state of the same name). The team is led by a civilian scientist, a Catullan female named Doctor Norsan Gur. She is a middle-aged humanoid with a high hairline and bushy eyebrows; her hair is dark purple fringed with gray. The rest of her team includes a pair of male civilian scientists (both humanoid Minor NPCs) and a Vulcan Starfleet ensign, T'Zheen. All of them except Gur are currently disguised as Kalmuri.

T'Zheen is the one who called in the crew to investigate the death of their other Starfleet team member, Lieutenant Ricardo Li, over the objections of Dr. Gur. When the crew questions the observation team, they will learn the following:

- One day ago, the team was observing the Aphios Research Institute's tests of an experimental artificial gravity generator. As Starfleet officers know well, a gravitational field is an elementary spacetime warp, a simple form of the same physics that underlie warp drives, wormholes, and most other forms of faster-than-light propulsion, as well as deflectors, tractor beams, and some types of cloak. Artificial gravity generation is thus the first practical step toward interstellar travel, so Gur's team considers their observation of this historic moment to be highly important.
- Ricardo Li and T'Zheen used forged identities as Rikeli and Tezin, visiting researchers from a university in a small overseas country named Pytulis to gain access to the gravity experiment as observers. Li, the team's engineer, was in the test chamber when the fatal accident occurred, killing him along with the generator's inventor and his assistant. Details are unclear, but apparently the gravity generator ran out of control and produced an intense enough field to crush everyone in the chamber. T'Zheen says she was conducting observations elsewhere in the city at the time of the accident.
- T'Zheen argues that it was irresponsible to send in a direct observer. Accidents aside, it risked violating the Prime Directive and contaminating the Kalmuri's own scientific process. What if she or Li had been asked to assist in the experiment? They might have inadvertently revealed scientific knowledge the Kalmuri did not yet possess. T'Zheen says they should simply

CAPTAIN'S LOG

STARDATE 48841.4

We have been ordered to assist a Federation observation team on the planet Kalmur, a pre-contact world whose humanoid inhabitants are in the early stages of research that could lead to warp drive. One member of the observation team is missing and presumed dead after a fatal accident in the research facility. Our mission is to investigate the accident and to aid in recovering any identifiable human remains.

As always, our highest priority will be to preserve the Prime Directive and ensure our presence on Kalmur does not disrupt its culture's natural development. This is a particularly sensitive concern when a society is this close to expanding into space on its own. A mishandled, unplanned first contact could frighten them away from space travel, or make them belligerent toward aliens once they emerge. Starfleet pre-contact teams understand the stakes better than anyone – which is what makes the presence of an observer at the site of a fatal accident so troubling. Was it merely a coincidence – or something more?

have infiltrated the facility via transporter and planted sensors and imagers to record the experiment from a safe distance.

- Gur insists that sending Li in personally was a necessary, calculated risk. In her view, passively recording such a historic moment would not adequately capture it. In the tradition of immersion anthropology, someone needed to experience it firsthand, to know what it felt like to be one of the people involved, and to question the other participants directly about their experience. "The Federation can learn nothing here about physics and engineering that it hasn't known for generations," she says. "Our contribution to history lies in capturing the experience itself, its meaning for the individuals involved. We take this technology so much for granted in our everyday lives – how else can we experience how it feels to discover it for the first time?"
- The other two civilian team members are trying to stay out of the conflict between Gur and T'Zheen. They respect Gur's authority and brilliance, but they liked Lt. Li and are troubled by his loss.

Once these basics are established, it becomes evident that learning more will require inspecting the scene of the accident more directly. Luckily, the cover that Gur set up for her people allows the away team to gain access to the accident site as representatives of the University of Pytulis. Gur can arrange clearances for two Players along with T'Zheen; the rest can monitor over their communicators.

LIEUTENANT T'ZHEEN [MAJOR NPC]

TRAITS: Vulcan

VALUES:
- Increase Knowledge
- Uphold the Prime Directive
- There Are Logical Exceptions to Every Rule

ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL	11	FITNESS	09	PRESENCE	08
DARING	10	INSIGHT	10	REASON	12

DISCIPLINES

COMMAND	03	SECURITY	02	SCIENCE	05
CONN	02	ENGINEERING	02	MEDICINE	02

FOCUSES: Anthropology, Sociology

STRESS: 11 **RESISTANCE:** 0

ATTACKS:
- Phaser Type-2 (Ranged, 5, Size 1H, Charge)
- Vulcan nerve pinch (Melee, 2 Intense, Size 1H, Non-lethal)

SPECIAL RULES:
- **NERVE PINCH**
- **MIND MELD**

DOCTOR NORSAN GUR [MAJOR NPC]

TRAITS: Catullan

VALUES:
- Cultures Can Only Be Understood from Within
- Science Demands Taking Risks

ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL	10	FITNESS	08	PRESENCE	10
DARING	11	INSIGHT	10	REASON	11

DISCIPLINES

COMMAND	04	SECURITY	02	SCIENCE	05
CONN	01	ENGINEERING	01	MEDICINE	03

FOCUSES: Anthropology, Sociology, History, Administration

STRESS: 10 **RESISTANCE:** 0

ATTACKS:
- Catullan nerve pinch (Melee, 3 Intense, Size 2H, Non-lethal)

SPECIAL RULES:
- **CATULLAN NERVE PINCH** — Similar to the Vulcan Nerve Pinch, but administered by placing the extended thumbs on opposite sides of the victim's neck below the ears. Subject is incapacitated briefly by a psionic shock.

SCENE 2: THE GRAVITY LAB

T'Zheen and the two Player Characters (ideally a science officer and a security officer) are shown the accident site by the Aphios Research Institute's director, Karn Maklet, a lean, edgy Kalmuri just shy of middle age with a hungry look in his eye. Through the monitor room's large observation windows they can see the gravity lab, a large octagonal chamber whose floor is about half a story below. The thick windows and their support frames are warped as if some intense force had pulled them toward the center of the lab.

A large pile of wrecked equipment is piled up in the center of the lab, most of it seemingly crushed inward or half-melted. Underneath it can be glimpsed the crushed remains of a large device in the shape of a thick torus parallel to the floor. Large equipment consoles bolted to the floor and heavy conduits running from floor to ceiling are still in place, but appear to be warped inward, not unlike the window. Leaning against one wall, at about a 20-degree angle from vertical, is a thick rectangular slab, about 3 by 4 meters and half a meter thick. It appears quite heavy, and it's the only loose item in the room that hasn't been pulled into the center. The wreckage pile and one of the massive consoles are encrusted with brown stains of dried blood, though Maklet apologetically explains that they've removed whatever remains they could.

The science officer should have an opportunity to take a clandestine tricorder scan of the lab, and should be able to surreptitiously review the results during the following.

INSPECTOR DORI LANOX [MAJOR NPC]

TRAITS: Kalmuri (Species modifiers +1 Darting, +1 Insight, +1 Presence)

VALUES:
- Solving the Case Is All I Care About
- I Hate Being Lied To
- People Can Generally Handle Whatever You Throw At Them

ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL	10	FITNESS	08	PRESENCE	09
DARING	10	INSIGHT	11	REASON	12

DISCIPLINES

COMMAND	04	SECURITY	05	SCIENCE	02
CONN	01	ENGINEERING	01	MEDICINE	03

FOCUSES: Law Enforcement, Criminal Investigation, Unarmed Combat, Firearms

STRESS: 13 **RESISTANCE:** 0

ATTACKS:
- Kalmuri plasma pistol (Ranged, 7, Size 1H)

SPECIAL RULES:
- **INTERROGATION**
- **DAUNTLESS**

DIRECTOR KARN MAKLET [NOTABLE NPC]

TRAITS: Kalmuri

VALUES:
- Wisdom Is Wasted on the Old
- I Don't Have a Gambling Problem, It's Just a Setback

ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL	07	FITNESS	08	PRESENCE	10
DARING	10	INSIGHT	09	REASON	10

DISCIPLINES

COMMAND	03	SECURITY	00	SCIENCE	02
CONN	01	ENGINEERING	02	MEDICINE	01

FOCUSES: Administration, Finance, Engineering

STRESS: 8 **RESISTANCE:** 0

ATTACKS:
- None

SPECIAL RULES:
- **NIGHT VISION**

Maklet introduces Meni Nelorn, a young, amiable female grad student with large, striking eyes and lustrous dark fur. She appears devastated by the death of her mentor, Doctor Rax Kortar. She explains that the research team was testing Kortar's experimental gravity torus when it ran out of control. The occupants of the lab included Kortar, his assistant Loat Imorin, and the foreign observer "Rikeli" (Li's alias). Nelorn explains that she had been given the day off by Kortar. She feels guilty that she wasn't on hand, feeling that maybe she could have done something to override the torus before it was too late. (The Gamemaster might try to inject a hint of ambivalence in her expressions of grief.)

With Nelorn overcome with emotion, Maklet explains that the malfunction caused the device's gravity to increase so rapidly that Kortar and Li literally fell into it, drawn inexorably toward the center of the lab and crushed against the gravity generator along with the other loose objects in the room. Imorin braced himself behind the heavy console, but of course, nothing can block a gravitational field. (Note to Gamemaster: This fact of physics is a detail that needs to be mentioned, but should be mentioned casually, as something everyone takes for granted.) Even at that distance from the generator, the gravitational force eventually became so great that Imorin was crushed against the console by his own weight. Eventually, the immense weight of the debris against the torus became great enough to crush it, shutting down the gravitational field, but by that point it was far too late for the room's occupants, whose bodies had been virtually liquefied by the intense gravity.

It should be established that this was reconstructed after the fact from the physical evidence and the instrument readings recorded during the test. There were no cameras in the lab, because that would not have been useful for the gravitational, mechanical, and electromagnetic readings they were taking, and the cameras' signals could interfere with sensitive EM detectors.

Maklet adds that the wreckage and remains were discovered soon thereafter by another member of the institute, Doctor Sifa Jezen. Kortar and Jezen had been competitors developing rival experiments. Nelorn points out the heavy rectangular plate leaned against one wall and explains that it's a failed gravity generation experiment of Jezen's, too massive to be easily removed from the lab, so it was just moved off to the side to make room for Kortar's torus. (This is another detail that should be mentioned casually enough that it isn't obviously important.) As for Jezen herself, she had been assigned to monitor the experiment in Nelorn's absence, but was apparently out of the monitor room at the time of the accident; according to her, she had a health issue that required her to retreat to the restroom for some time. Maklet sounds skeptical of the fact that Kortar's greatest rival was conveniently absent when the accident occurred.

Nelorn comes to Jezen's defense, pointing out that she's fairly old and such health issues are only to be expected. Maklet points out that her age gave her reason to feel threatened by the younger, up-and-coming Imorin. But Nelorn argues that it would have been impossible to sabotage the gravity torus from the outside. The torus had a failsafe that was tested and proven to be working at the start of the session. Telemetry shows it failed to activate – but the failsafe is a physical switch triggered by high gravity, and the only way to prevent its activation would've been to block it directly some time after the lab was sealed for the experiment. And the door sensors confirm that the door was not opened between the start of the experiment and the moment when it was forced open from outside after the fatal accident. This is the crux of the mystery: the failsafe was so simple that it could not have failed unless it was sabotaged, but no one could have sabotaged the torus and gotten out alive.

A new voice speaks up: "Not by any means known to our science." This is an imposing Kalmuri female with bronze skin and golden fur, dressed in a multi-pocketed vest and a trenchcoat that looks well-travelled. Two Kalmuri police officers enter the room behind her. Maklet introduces her as Inspector Dori Lanox, the Aphios Bureau of Investigation's chief investigator into the accident. Lanox should be played as the sort of character who could star in her own mystery series – a strong-willed and charismatic master detective, a bit disreputable in look and attitude, but ultra-competent and fundamentally decent. She takes a keen interest in T'Zheen and the away team members, asking probing questions about their bona fides as representatives of the University of Pytulis. She finds their explanations unconvincing, revealing that she's done some digging into the credentials presented by "Rikeli" (Li) and "Tezin" (T'Zheen). She's just heard back from Pytulis and discovered that no such individuals have ever worked for their university. She strongly encourages the away team members to accompany her to ABI headquarters. It's clear that she won't take no for an answer.

SCENE 3: LANOX'S DEDUCTIONS

In a stark, grungy interview room at ABI headquarters, Inspector Lanox lays it on the line for the away team members. She knows they aren't who they claim to be. She lays out the following deductions:

- Her first thought was that they were industrial or military spies from some rival country. But spies would be more competent at creating cover identities, and would show greater knowledge of the country they claim to come from. (Establish that she's been questioning them about this country before the scene started, exposing the flaws and gaps in their knowledge. Treat this as a deception-based Persuasion Task that fails automatically, but feel free to come up with some specific Pytulian cultural traits

GRAD STUDENT MENI NELORN [NOTABLE NPC]

TRAITS: Kalmuri

ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL	09	FITNESS	08	PRESENCE	09
DARING	08	INSIGHT	10	REASON	10

DISCIPLINES

COMMAND	01	SECURITY	00	SCIENCE	03
CONN	02	ENGINEERING	02	MEDICINE	01

VALUES:
- Scientists Are My Heroes
- Others' Needs Come Before My Own

FOCUSES: Physics, Mathematics, Electronics

STRESS: 8 **RESISTANCE:** 0

ATTACKS:
- None

SPECIAL RULES:
- **NIGHT VISION**

KALMURI POLICE/SECURITY OFFICER [MINOR NPC]

TRAITS: Kalmuri

ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL	09	FITNESS	10	PRESENCE	08
DARING	09	INSIGHT	08	REASON	07

DISCIPLINES

COMMAND	01	SECURITY	02	SCIENCE	00
CONN	01	ENGINEERING	00	MEDICINE	02

VALUES:
- Scientists Are My Heroes
- Others' Needs Come Before My Own

FOCUSES: Physics, Mathematics, Electronics

STRESS: 8 **RESISTANCE:** 0

ATTACKS:
- Kalmuri plasma pistol (Ranged, 4▲, Size 1H)

SPECIAL RULES:
- **NIGHT VISION**

This profile can be used for Lanox's police support, the security guards encountered in Scene 3B, and the minor thugs working for Bruk Niryk.

that the Player Characters have gotten wrong or were not aware of.)

- The away team members lack Kalmuri night vision, which Lanox demonstrates by turning out the lights and asking them to identify several photographs, which they're unable to do. (Even if one of the Player Characters does have night vision, it's unlikely they both will.)

- The DNA of Kortar and Imorin was identifiable in the remains, but the third set of DNA traces, which must be Rikeli's, show anomalous attributes unlike any Kalmuri.

- A small, mysterious badge (recognizable from her description as a Starfleet combadge) was found crushed amid the wreckage. It contained circuitry more sophisticated than anything yet invented on Kalmur.

The ABI lab techs can only guess at its functioning, but its audio pickup and speaker indicate that it's a communication device. It doesn't seem to emit a radio signal, but at the time of the accident, some of the instruments in the gravity lab picked up strange readings that theory suggests would be associated with radiation in a hypothetical realm called subspace.

Lanox says that what this all suggests is so insane that she hasn't yet mentioned it to anyone else, but she can see no other explanation: "Rikeli" was from outer space, and he attempted to signal his people for help before his death. And that means the people before her are probably the ones he was trying to call – more aliens like him.

The Prime Directive would dictate that the Players deny this, but Lanox is no fool. She points out that she could have them

subjected to medical examination in order to prove their alien nature on the record. She says that they obviously wish to avoid that. But if they were responsible for the fatal accident – say, if "Rikeli" had sabotaged the gravity torus and been killed as a result – then they probably wouldn't have come anywhere near the lab afterward, for fear of discovery. So she suspects that they're trying to find out why their man died, and that means she and they want the same thing.

Therefore, Lanox offers them an alternative. She's convinced the gravity torus had to be sabotaged and that she's investigating a murder. But there's no known way anyone could've sabotaged the torus from inside the lab and gotten out alive. It's a mystery she can't solve on her own, but maybe the "aliens" can. If they use their advanced knowledge and resources to help her solve the case, then she promises she will keep their secret. But if they refuse to tell her the truth, that will indicate they have something bigger to hide than their identities, and that will make her suspect their guilt.

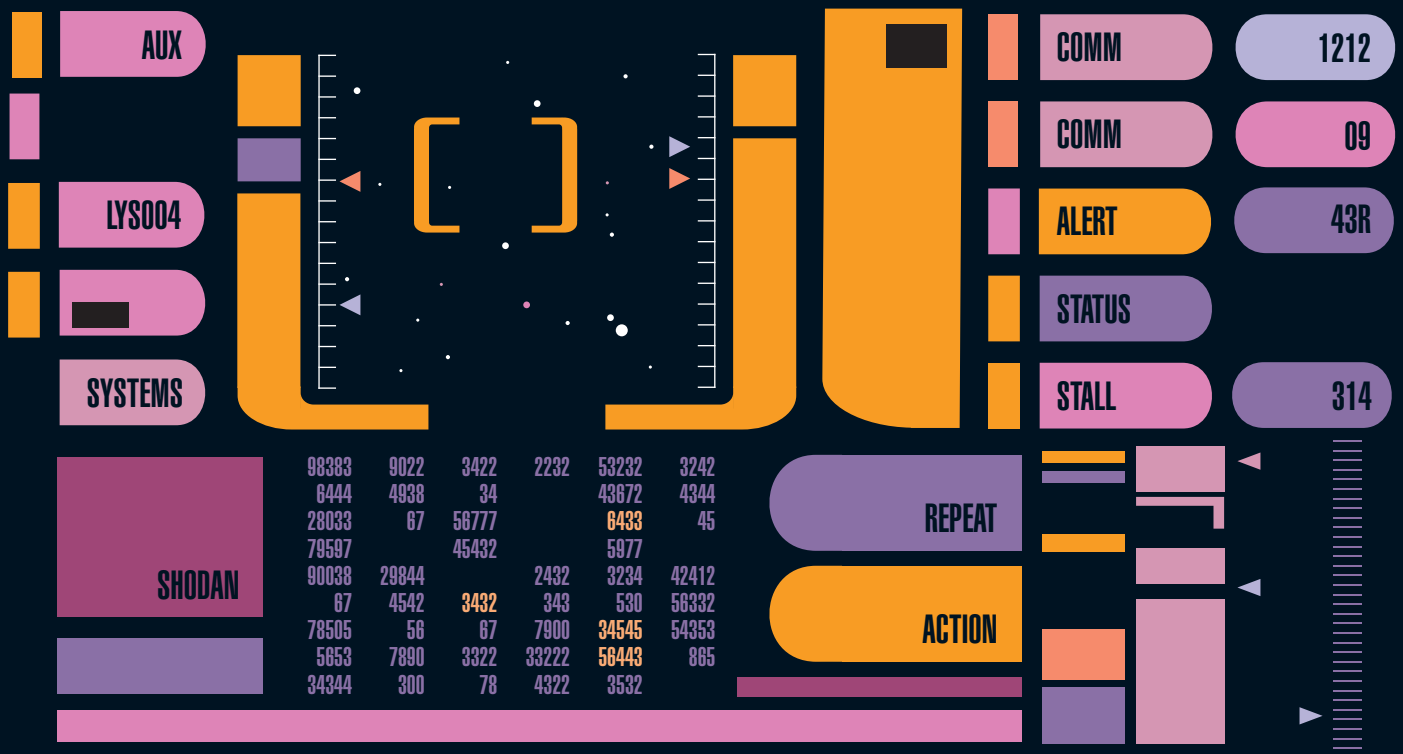
Lanox steps out to give the Players and T'Zheen a chance to talk the matter over. T'Zheen points out the Prime Directive implications of the situation. This research could have a profound impact on Kalmur's future, so any intervention by Starfleet could disrupt the planet's natural development. But the Players should understand that if Lanox has them examined and proves they're aliens, that would be just as disruptive. T'Zheen recommends that they simply beam away (they have subcutaneous transponders which they can trigger for retrieval). Their disappearance would be a mystery, but one that left no physical evidence to allow the Kalmuri to solve it. It's the least disruptive thing they could do, she argues.

But the science officer has completed the tricorder analysis of the remains. The Gamemaster should pass them a sheet with the following information:

The scan of the remains indicates that there is insufficient human biological material present to account for Lieutenant Li's biomass. The Kalmuri did clear away most of the remains, but Li's remains and Kortar's would have been impossible to separate, so there should be roughly equal proportions of both individuals' genetic material left behind. But the amount of Li's DNA detected is very small compared to the other two victims – not enough to prove that he died in there.

However impossible it seems, Li may still be alive somewhere, possibly wounded. But T'Zheen confirms that Gur scanned the entire city for his biosigns and found nothing. If he's alive, he may be somewhere that sensors can't detect.

This creates a dilemma for the Players. The only way to find their missing officer, it seems, is to cooperate with Lanox and help her solve the case. But how far are they willing to bend the Prime Directive in order to do so? The Players should have the opportunity to role-play the debate over the ethics of the issue. T'Zheen says that Li would be willing to die to preserve the Directive. But if Li is out there, perhaps injured or captive, that risks his exposure as an alien. And they all risk exposure if they don't cooperate with Lanox.



CHAPTER 01.30

THE GRAVITY OF THE CRIME

ACT 2: LEGWORK

SCENE 1: THE PRIME DETECTIVE

Lanox returns and repeats her demand that the Players help her solve the mystery. She is a keen observer and has no patience for dishonesty, so any attempt to keep up the pretense of being Kalmuri will only upset her and make her more likely to arrest and expose the Players. Their only choice is to admit that she's right and hope they can convince her to keep their secret, using Social Conflict, role playing, or both. An appeal based on an honest statement of the Player's Values will be most likely to sway Lanox.

Still, the Prime Directive remains a concern. The Players may try to explain the philosophy and logic behind the Directive and convince Lanox to retract her ultimatum. However, her response will depend on how the Players interpret the Directive.

- If the rationale behind the Directive is explained in terms of the Kalmuri being too backward or primitive to be ready for contact, this will offend Lanox. She will point out that her people are scientifically advanced and have an active space program, that their astronomers have been searching for alien radio signals for decades, and that their fiction and literature have been exploring the conjectural idea of alien life for centuries. Most Kalmuri already take it for granted that life exists elsewhere, so how would the confirmation of that belief disrupt their worldview?

- If the Players argue that exposure to outside ideas and beliefs would "contaminate" Kalmuri society, Lanox will counter that Kalmur already has multiple different cultures that have been interacting and affecting each other's belief systems for thousands of years. Yes, sometimes the interaction has done harm, but only when the more powerful culture actively tried to impose its religion or values. In other cases, the interaction has been beneficial. Her own nation, Aphios, has always been a center of cultural exchange, a crossroads where peoples from different parts of the world came to trade and interact, and that ferment and interplay of ideas is what allowed it to become the most advanced nation on Kalmur. Countries like Pytulis are more backward *because* they remain culturally isolated. So Lanox rejects the idea that interaction equals harmful contamination.

- The best bet will be explaining the Prime Directive in terms of respect for other cultures' equality and freedom of choice. Nobody understands the Kalmuri's culture, values, and needs better than the Kalmuri themselves. So the Prime Directive is about reminding Starfleet officers that their superior technology does not give them superior wisdom about another culture and thus doesn't entitle them to impose their own solutions that might turn out to be wrong or harmful for the indigenous culture. In this case, they can't understand Kalmuri social dynamics, laws, and psychology as well as an experienced detective like Lanox, so interfering in her investigation could do more harm than good. Lanox will be most swayed by an argument along these lines, but will counter that it's still her best judgment that she could use the benefit of alien knowledge, or at least the assistance of advisors as scientifically knowledgeable as the Player Characters are. If nothing else, she'll help them find Rikeli's fate if they work with her.

OPTIONS

Depending on how willing the Players are to bend the Prime Directive, and how successful they were at earning Lanox's respect and understanding of their point of view, there are two possible paths for the investigation to take. Players may choose one or employ a mix of both.

- **Old-school detective work:** The crew argues Lanox to a compromise position: They will help her investigate the case, but only using the resources, scientific knowledge, and detection techniques available to the Kalmuri. This will let the Players act out something akin to a present-day murder mystery or police procedural.

- **Starfleet-style investigation:** The crew consents to use their advanced technology and scientific knowledge to gather evidence Lanox couldn't. This plays out more like a standard *Star Trek* story.

PATH A: OLD-SCHOOL DETECTIVE WORK

SCENE 2A: QUESTIONING THE KALMURI SUSPECTS

If the crew decide to aid in the investigation using only Kalmuri techniques, then the first step Lanox undertakes is to bring in the parties involved for interrogation. One member of the away team is able to sit in on the interviews and ask questions while the other or others watch through a one-way mirror.

Lanox interrogates Sifa Jezen first. Dr. Jezen is a lean, white-furred Kalmuri, somewhat elderly but healthy and animated. Her manner is proud and blunt, but not without humor. Lanox's interrogation allows the questioners to extract the following information:

- Jezen confirms that she was inside the lab before the torus test, working with the others to prepare the experiment, explaining the recent traces of her DNA found in the lab. But she insists she left before the experiment began – obviously, since the door sensors confirm that no one left the lab after it began.
- She admits she was jealous that her prototype gravity plate was rejected in favor of Dr. Kortar's torus. She's miffed that "My plating was just shoved aside, leaned against the wall like a leftover shipping pallet." But she says she respected Kortar and regrets his death.
- By contrast, Jezen despised Dr. Imorin, a young upstart who sucked up to Dr. Kortar and Director Maklet for his own personal advancement. Maklet had made it clear that he intended to fire the aging Dr. Jezen in favor of "the new generation." Jezen makes no attempt to deny that she hated Imorin and is glad he's dead; since there's no physically possible way she could be the killer, she has nothing to lose by confessing it.
- Jezen suspects that Imorin got his job by blackmailing Director Maklet. She says it's the only way someone so young and inexperienced could have gotten such a prominent post at the Institute. She doesn't know the specifics, but she advises looking into Maklet's fondness for gambling.
- Jezen's theory is that Imorin sabotaged the torus to murder Kortar. His motive, she suggests, is that he wanted to go down in history as the one responsible for perfecting artificial gravity, not share the glory with anyone else. In his youth and arrogance, she suggests, he miscalculated and believed he would be able to escape in time. Perhaps he was at the console because he was trying to shut the torus down once Kortar and "Rikeli" were dead, and he failed to realize that the gravity runaway was impossible to reverse.

Interrogating Director Maklet brings out the following:

- Lanox's investigation has turned up evidence that Maklet has misappropriated Institute finances to feed his gambling addiction.
- Maklet confesses that Imorin knew this and was blackmailing him, but insists that it was worth it. "Imorin may have been arrogant and manipulative, but he brought fresh new insights to the field, which was more than Sifa Jezen has done in the past decade. She was of value to this institute during my predecessor's tenure, but her time has passed. Imorin was a bastard, to be sure, but genius forgives a multitude of sins. Why do you think I kept Kortar on staff despite the way he treated poor Meni Nelorn?" He clams up and insists they'll have to ask Nelorn about that.
- Maklet had no motive to wish Dr. Kortar dead either, that he had more faith in Kortar's work than Jezen's. "Losing Kortar and Imorin and still having Jezen is the worst possible outcome from my perspective. Even if I had the scientific knowhow to sabotage the torus and escape somehow, I would've had no motive."
- The director gripes about the boondoggle that Jezen's gravity plate experiment turned out to be. He complains about her stubbornness, saying she refused to let him remove the failed plate from the lab, insisting that she could modify it and try again.

Interrogating Meni Nelorn reveals the following:

- In the year that Nelorn had been Kortar's graduate student, he had subjected her to ongoing sexual harassment and humiliation, short of outright rape but still traumatic for her. She hated the way he treated her, but she kept the job because it was essential to her career.
- Despite the harassment, she claims she isn't glad Kortar is dead. She admired his brilliance and saw his abusive side as a tragic flaw in an otherwise great man. She feels more bitterness toward Maklet for ignoring her complaints, feeling that Kortar would have treated her better if he'd been ordered to stop and kept under closer watch.
- Nelorn did find it unfair that Imorin had higher status and privilege than she did despite being only a few years older. She didn't want him dead, though; she's mortified at the very suggestion that she would ever wish harm on anyone. Besides, she adds, "Imorin spent so much time sucking up to Dr. Kortar that it distracted him from me. I was grateful for the respite."

- Nelorn feels nothing but respect and admiration for Jezen, and would have liked to be her graduate assistant instead. “She’s not that easy to like, but that’s just her way.” But Maklet would not allocate enough of a budget to Jezen for her to hire Nelorn away from Kortar.

- Nelorn claims to have spent her day off by herself. Her alibi is weak, but institute logs have no record of her presence that day.

- Out of scientific curiosity and a desire to be helpful, Nelorn has been brainstorming possible ways that someone could have sabotaged the gravity torus and survived. The only way she can imagine that anyone in the lab could have survived the hypergravity would be through a neutral buoyancy tank containing a dense, oxygenated fluid, like the kind deep-sea divers use to withstand the pressure of the deep ocean. But nobody could have erected such a tank in the lab without being noticed, or disassembled it and dried off before Jezen and others arrived on the scene.

- The only other option she can imagine is antigravity, but she insists Kalmuri science is nowhere near inventing it. Jezen once idly spoke to her about having researched a theory of gravity nullification, but her theories were deemed implausible and her paper was never published. Jezen had hoped that her gravity plate experiment would vindicate the theory on which she had based that paper, but unfortunately the experiment failed.

SCENE 3A: QUESTIONING THE OBSERVATION TEAM

Meanwhile, the rest of the away team is questioning Dr. Gur, T’Zheen, and the other observers, pursuing a possibility they can’t mention to Lanox: that Li could have sabotaged the generator and beamed himself out, or been beamed out by someone else such as Dr. Gur. Or perhaps he was the intended victim of one of the other observers, who beamed in to sabotage the torus and then beamed out again. It’s a long shot, but they need to look into it.

T’Zheen will have the following to say:

- Dr. Gur and Lt. Li did not get along at all. Li was a stickler for the Prime Directive, often arguing with Gur over her willingness to risk exposure or interference in the name of her theories of immersion anthropology. When she overruled his objections to observing the gravity testing in person, he insisted on going personally to ensure that interference was minimized. As a Vulcan, T’Zheen was the only other one he trusted to follow the rules precisely.

- This also means that Li was the last person who would have had a motive to sabotage the gravity torus. Allowing the Kalmuri’s research to proceed without interference was paramount to him.

DOCTOR SIFA JEZEN [MAJOR NPC]

TRAITS: Kalmuri

VALUES:
- My Worth Must Be Acknowledged
- Reaching the Stars Will Be Our Greatest Achievement
- It’s Not Wrong if You Get Away With It

ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL	11	FITNESS	07	PRESENCE	10
DARING	10	INSIGHT	10	REASON	12

DISCIPLINES

COMMAND	03	SECURITY	02	SCIENCE	05
CONN	01	ENGINEERING	04	MEDICINE	01

FOCUSES: Physics, Quantum Gravity, Mathematics, Electronics, Programming

STRESS: 13 **RESISTANCE:** 0

ATTACKS:
- None

SPECIAL RULES:
- **JURY RIG**
- **INTENSE SCRUTINY**
- **COMPUTER EXPERTISE**
- **NIGHT VISION**

- T’Zheen is reluctant to suggest that Gur could have beamed in and sabotaged the torus to kill Li. She does suggest, however, that Gur may have lied about not receiving Li’s emergency transmission. She could have heard his call for help and chosen not to beam him out, allowing him to die in the accident out of a vindictive emotional impulse.

The two civilian males on the team have nothing to offer beyond confirming that Gur and Li did not get along, so their interviews can be skipped over.

When confronted about T’Zheen’s accusations, Dr. Gur will say this:

“I didn’t want to say anything earlier, since I have no proof. But if anyone on this team had a motive to kill Ricardo Li, it was T’Zheen. The night before the accident, I heard them arguing. Ricardo was furious at T’Zheen, saying he’d let her down, that she’d violated the Prime Directive. She replied that what she’d done was necessary and he couldn’t do

anything to change it. I asked Ricardo about it afterward, but he wouldn't talk. He said he wasn't ready to make any formal accusations until he'd thought it through. The next day, he died in that lab, and T'Zheen's whereabouts at the time were unclear."

Confronting T'Zheen leads her to admit the following:

"Very well. I suppose logic demands I must tell the truth so as not to distract from the search for the real killer.

"Technically, I did interfere. But I did so on a strictly personal level. In the course of monitoring the experiment, I had become aware that Doctor Kortar was sexually harassing his assistant, Meni Nelorn. Per Starfleet regulations, I should have said nothing and allowed it to continue, for revealing my knowledge would have risked exposure of our monitoring devices. But I could see no logical argument by which the future development of Kalmuri civilization should hinge on one young woman's suffering.

"Therefore, I confronted the doctor and revealed that I knew what he had done. When he attempted to dismiss my charges, I used my Vulcan strength to intimidate him. I admit to a certain satisfaction at seeing him cower in fear, exposed as the small and frightened being he truly was. I warned him that I would see him ruined if he did not stop his harassment and seek therapy for his behavioral disorder.

"Ricardo Li observed a portion of this incident and confronted me about it afterward. I recognize that this gives me motive to kill both him and Kortar. But I was absent at the time of the incident because I was with Meni Nelorn, speaking to her in confidence about her situation and encouraging her to seek counseling. She is my alibi."

In any case, a review of the observation post's transporter logs will prove that their transporter was not used at the time of the accident. The sensor logs confirm that the gravity torus was producing too much subspace interference anyway, meaning that Li's emergency signal could not have gotten through. T'Zheen's suspicions about Gur are unwarranted, and were mostly just an attempt to distract attention from her own actions.

BRUK NIRYK [NOTABLE NPC]

TRAITS: Kalmuri

VALUES:
- You Want a Job Done, Just Meet My Price

ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL	09	FITNESS	10	PRESENCE	09
DARING	10	INSIGHT	08	REASON	08

DISCIPLINES

COMMAND	02	SECURITY	03	SCIENCE	00
CONN	02	ENGINEERING	01	MEDICINE	01

FOCUSES: Security, Weapons, Unarmed Combat

STRESS: 13 **RESISTANCE:** 0

ATTACKS:
- Kalmuri plasma pistol (Ranged, 5, Size 1H)
- Army knife (Melee, 4 Vicious 1, Size 1H, Deadly)

SPECIAL RULES:
- **NIGHT VISION**

ENCOUNTER: THE HIRED GUNS

That evening, en route from the institute to ABI headquarters in Lanox's ground car, Lanox and the two Player Characters with her are driven off the road in the warehouse district by several Kalmuri in another car. The Players and Lanox must retreat into a vacant warehouse where a firefight ensues. The Players must decide whether to use their phasers or attempt to subdue the thugs by unarmed combat, or using the resources available in the warehouse (e.g. using chains, crowbars, or wooden boards as makeshift weapons, dropping a suspended crate on the thugs, trapping them between the prongs of a forklift, etc.).

If the Players are successful, they and Lanox will subdue and capture the thugs. Most are just hired muscle, but their leader is Bruk Niryk, an ex-military security consultant who works for Aphios's leading casino, but who does freelance mercenary or "enforcement" work on the side. When questioned, he explains he does not know the identity of his employer, since he was hired and given instructions through text messages. But when Lanox shows him photos of the suspects, he confirms that he recognizes Karn Maklet as a regular patron of the casino he works for. When asked if Maklet is acquainted with him in turn, he chuckles. "When someone's in that much debt to my employers, believe me, they're well acquainted with casino security."

OPTIONAL SCENE: TRACKING LI

If the Players feel that conventional police procedure is taking too long, they may attempt to use Starfleet tech to track down Li behind Lanox's back. This would play out like the second part of Scene 2B and Scene 3B below, although they would have to sneak past Lanox's officers to gain access to the gravity lab (perhaps by beaming in). However, it runs the risk of angering Lanox if she finds out. Her trust in the away

team members is tenuous, and if that trust is broken, she will no longer be willing to keep their existence secret.

Note that Bruk Niryk is involved in Scene 3B as well, so if both scenes occur at the same time, a Minor NPC thug would have to be substituted for Niryk in one of them. Alternatively, if they occur consecutively, Niryk could escape in the earlier scene and be captured in the later one.

SCENE 4A: CRACKING THE CASE

By this point, the Players should have enough information to piece together the solution. Niryk's involvement points to Maklet, but Maklet lacks the scientific knowledge to have pulled off the murders. When questioned by Lanox, he insists that he couldn't afford to hire Niryk and his thugs, given how deeply he's in debt, and the investigation of his finances bears this out. Also, Jezen's testimony revealed that she was aware of Maklet's gambling problems, and thus could have known about Niryk and hired him to throw suspicion onto Maklet.

Jezen claimed to be upset about the gravity plate being left leaning against the wall, but Maklet revealed that she insisted on keeping it in the lab. Also, as heavy as it appears to be, the science officer's calculations should show that it should at least have been pulled over by the torus's gravity at its peak, and should not have still been leaning against the wall. The research paper Nelorn mentioned is a tipoff that Jezen knew in theory how to nullify gravity, and that her plate experiment might have been capable of neutralizing the pull from Kortar's gravity torus. Nelorn was on the right track – Jezen must have sabotaged the generator, then activated her plate and hid in the gap between it and the lab wall, shielded by its null-gravity field. (The gap is about a meter wide at the base.) The recorded opening of the lab door, which Jezen claimed to have occurred when she returned to the lab and rushed inside after the accident, must actually have been the saboteur/killer escaping afterward – meaning that Jezen lied about her alibi. This also implies that she knows what happened to Lt. Li, and may even be holding him captive. If she didn't leave him to die with the others, that implies that she figured out Li was an alien, and thus worth keeping alive.

But Lanox points out that all of this is supposition. The physics involved are so advanced that there's no way to prove that Jezen actually succeeded in nullifying gravity, or that her theories even made sense – unless the aliens are willing to change their minds about revealing their superior scientific knowledge, which they can't do without violating their precious non-interference directive. So how can she possibly prove that Jezen is guilty?

PATH B: STARFLEET-STYLE INVESTIGATION

SCENE 2B: FIRST STEPS

There are at least two options the crew could pursue if they decide to confide fully in Lanox.

The first, as in Scene 3A, is to question whether an observation team member could have used the transporter to commit the locked-room murder. This sequence would play out as described above, but with Lanox participating. Lanox adds a couple of her own questions to the interrogation:

- Lanox wonders if someone on the team planned to go native – sabotage the Kalmuri's gravity research so that they could then sell Federation gravity plating as their own breakthrough and use it to gain wealth and fame on Kalmur. This doesn't pan out because of the Federation's moneyless, post-scarcity society. Since everything can be replicated and wealth is ubiquitous, money is no longer a motive for crime. Lanox finds this enviable, if true (she's a little skeptical), but it leaves her nowhere.

- If the Players were not fully successful in "selling" the Prime Directive to Lanox in their earlier debate, she may suggest that the Directive itself could be a motive for murder. Maybe the scientists found out Li was an alien and he sabotaged the generator and killed them in order to preserve his cover. Gur and T'Zheen insist this would be out of character for Li, but as long as his whereabouts are unaccounted for, Lanox isn't convinced.

As before, questioning the observation team reveals some scandalous character tidbits but no smoking gun.

After or instead of this, the Players could return to the gravity lab with Lanox to conduct a more thorough analysis of the crime scene. This time, they're able to use their tricorders openly and examine the evidence more directly.

- A tricorder scan of Jezen's generator plate will reveal (as a **Reason + Engineering** Task with a Difficulty of 1) that it is based on a technology like that used in some types of antigrav systems, specifically the kind that can cancel out an existing gravity field and create a pocket of zero gravity, as opposed to generating an active repulsion effect. This technology generates a graviton inversion field that leaves tetryon decay traces that Starfleet tricorders can detect but Kalmuri science cannot. Those traces are detected in the vicinity of the generator plates, and their rate of decay indicates that the plates were active within the past few days, even though they were supposed to have been abandoned weeks ago.

- An environmental scan will reveal (as an **Insight + Science** Task with a Difficulty of 2) a chemical substance released in the accident that causes gradual deterioration

in the prosthetics they wear to pass as Kalmuri. The decaying prosthetics would release a compound detectable to tricorders. Traces of that compound are detected in the wreckage, indicating that Li's prosthetics would have begun to decay. Therefore, the crew may be able to use this chemical signature to track down Li.

SCENE 3B: TRACKING LI

The away team uses the chemical signature of the decaying prosthetic to search for Li using their tricorders. Since the chemical traces are faint and have had a couple of days to dissipate, this is an **Insight + Science** Task with a Difficulty of 3. All available members of the away team and observation team should be recruited to help, searching different areas of the city, with each Player and NPC having a separate opportunity to succeed in the Task.

While Lanox is aware that this is going on, the Players may try to convince her to let them handle it, since they don't want to reveal any more of their methods (or their true appearance, if Li's prosthetics have been compromised) than they have to. The Difficulty of this Persuasion Task depends on how successful they have been at winning Lanox's trust. If it fails, she will accompany the Players in their search.

If the search Task succeeds, the searchers will locate Li in an underground facility in a sparsely populated industrial district, naturally shielded from ship's sensors and transporters by the dense construction of the metallurgical refining plant above it.

CHALLENGE: THE GAUNTLET

Locating and reaching Li is a Linear Challenge requiring several consecutive Tasks.

- First, the Players must scan the planet and locate the entrance to the underground facility. This is a Difficulty 2 Task requiring **Insight + Science** or **Security**.

- Second, if Lanox is not present to flash her badge and gain access, then the Players must sneak past the guards to reach the entrance. This is a **Control + Security** Task with a Difficulty of 2 in the daytime or 3 at night (since the Kalmuri have a Night Vision advantage that the Players probably lack). If the Task fails, this leads to a brief Encounter with a security guard. This could be as simple as stunning the guard before he can summon reinforcements, but if it goes badly, it could result in Complications such as additional guards being alerted or a Player being injured in a firefight.

- Third, hack the door lock to the underground facility. This is an **Engineering + Insight** or **Reason** Task with a Difficulty of 1, since it's not a very advanced technology.

- Fourth is more of a challenge. At the base of the stairs is a short corridor with an electric defense grid – the walls and floor are charged and emit deadly electric arcs if anything passes between them. Tricorders show that the security sensor uses voice recognition, so they can't hack it (nor can they identify whose voice it's coded for). There could be several possible ways to circumvent this obstacle, so the nature and difficulty of this Task should be left to the discretion of the Players and the Gamemaster, though it should be at least Difficulty 3.

- Once past this obstacle and through the rear door, the Players will have a combat Encounter with Bruk Niryk, the mercenary described above. They must reach the room at the end of a long corridor to get to Li, but Niryk is able to duck into adjoining rooms along the corridor walls and use the door frames as cover while he defends the corridor. He's surprised by the Players' phasers, but he's a hardened ex-soldier, so it doesn't spook him for more than an instant.

Once Niryk is subdued, Ricardo Li will be found weak and injured in the final room. He's suffering from a mild concussion, but can be treated by a **Control + Medicine** Task with a Difficulty of 1. Once revived, Li will relate the following:

- He remembers little about the accident. He was struck in the head by debris, so his memory of events before his injury is vague. He remembers being in the lab with Kortar and Imorin, but he can't remember if anyone else was in the lab or what happened during the test. Neither can he recall how he got out of the lab alive.

- His first clear memory is waking up in captivity with his prosthetics torn off. After that, he was interrogated via text on a screen by someone who knew he was alien and wanted to extract his scientific knowledge. By questioning his unseen interrogator in turn, Li learned that his abductor realized he was an alien upon seeing his prosthetics damaged during the lab accident. His concussion suggests that he was struck in the head by debris, which must have caused the damage.

- The guard (Niryk) delivered food through a slot in the door twice daily, and they never saw each other face-to-face as far as Li recalls.

When questioned, Bruk Niryk will explain that he was hired and instructed by text message and never knew who hired him. He was given clear instructions to stay out of the captive's cell and thus never saw Li's face. He did not participate in carrying the unconscious Li from the Institute to the cell, but since Li is of slight build and Kalmuri are relatively strong, even Jezen or Nelorn could have carried him themselves.

LIEUTENANT RICARDO LI [NOTABLE NPC]

TRAITS: Human

ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL	10	FITNESS	09	PRESENCE	09
DARING	08	INSIGHT	08	REASON	10

DISCIPLINES

COMMAND	01	SECURITY	01	SCIENCE	02
CONN	02	ENGINEERING	03	MEDICINE	01

VALUES:
- The Prime Directive Is Absolute

STRESS: 10 **RESISTANCE:** 0

ATTACKS:
- None

SPECIAL RULES:
- **INTENSE SCRUTINY**
- **TESTING A THEORY**

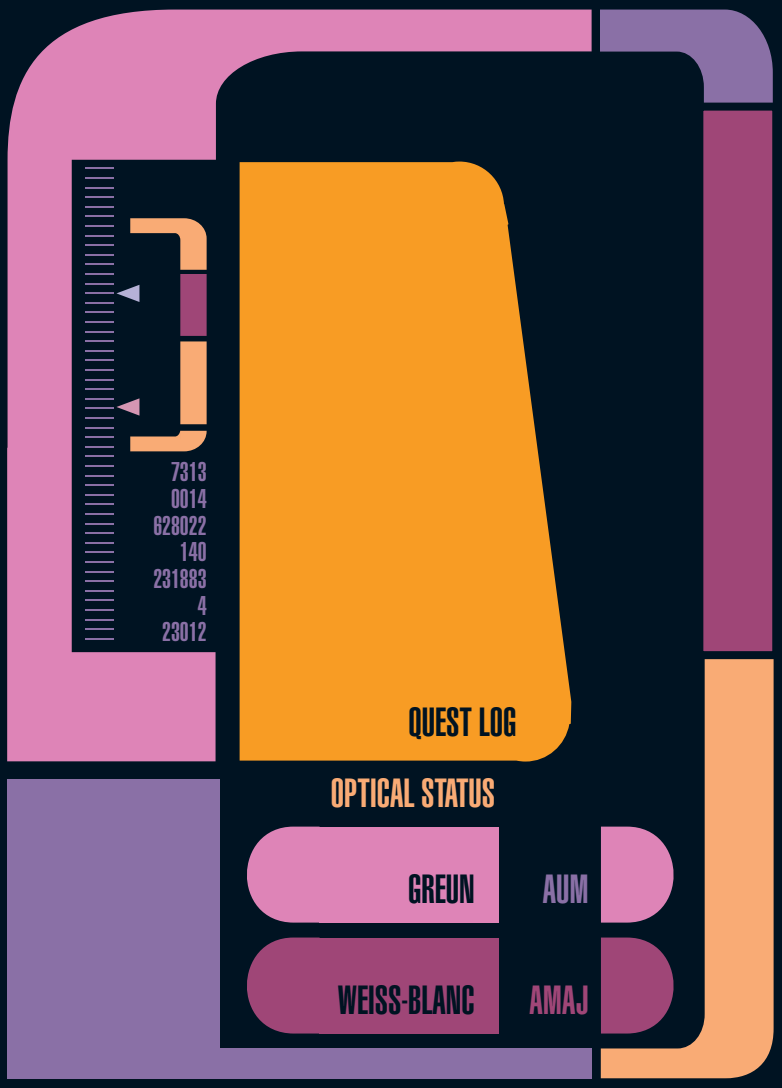
SCENE 4B: DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

A more detailed shipboard examination of Li confirms that he shows residual traces of exposure to a graviton inversion field. The logical conclusion is that his abductor modified Jezen's gravity plate to produce a null-gravity field, then hid with the unconscious Li in the gap between the plate and the wall, the null-gravity field shielding them from the hypergravity that crushed everything else in the lab.

The Players should be able to deduce that the only living Kalmuri who could have modified the plate that way is its inventor, Sifa Jezen. And the recorded opening of the lab door must have been Jezen escaping with Li afterward, rather than entering the lab as she claimed. Jezen must be the killer. If so, she too will have traces of the inversion field.

In the event that the Task to find Li does not succeed, the evidence from the gravity plates should still allow the crew to figure out the null-gravity solution, making Jezen their prime suspect. Again, this can be proven by scanning her for the inversion field, though with standard tricorders this will be an **Insight + Science** Task with a Difficulty of 4. But an engineering or science officer should be able to modify a tricorder to reduce the Difficulty to 2, which would itself be a **Control + Engineering** or **Science** Task with a Difficulty of 2.

But Lanox has a problem now. She knows Jezen is the murderer, but how can she justify an arrest or prove her case in court without revealing the alien technology that solved the case?



TRU — BACKUP NITROGEN STATUS

386 — PHASER UNDERCHARGE

MAXX — SUBSPACE BAND INDICATOR

LAZ — QUANTUM PORT OUTPUT

FAS — RAMJET ACCUMULATION OVERRIDE

CHAPTER 01.40

THE GRAVITY OF THE CRIME

ACT 3: CLOSING THE CASE

SCENE 1: EXTRACTING A CONFESSION

Lanox has called Jezen in to the interview room at ABI headquarters, hoping to talk her into confessing to the sabotage and murder. Jezen has her attorney with her. Lanox hopes to spook the scientist by confronting her with the knowledge of how she committed the murders. She has the Players participate in the interrogation since they can explain the details of the science better than she can. The Players and Lanox know (if Li was found) or suspect (if he was not) that Jezen is aware of aliens, and will be able to hint at this, though they have to be circumspect, since the attorney is present and the interview is being recorded.

Jezen is an intelligent and shrewd adversary, though, and she's difficult to break. Her lawyer is also advising her of any pitfalls. (Note to Gamemaster: For simplicity's sake, the lawyer could simply have inaudible, whispered conversations with Jezen, so only Jezen needs to be roleplayed.) There are several options the Players could try in concert with Lanox.

- Revealing that they have figured out what Jezen did and how: No luck. Jezen knows they can't prove any of it in court. If they had hard evidence – at least, any evidence they could admit to having – then they'd already have arrested her instead of trying to goad her into confessing.

- Pretending that they do have proof: No luck. Jezen will demand to know what it is. Even if they can produce "Rikeli" and Niryk, she'll know they can't definitively identify her. Lanox can prove that Jezen is a shareholder in the metallurgical plant where Li was found, but she'll counter that it's part of a larger investment portfolio whose specifics she's unaware of, since her broker handles it for her.

- Attempting to appeal to her guilt at Dr. Kortar's death: No luck. By now, she's spoken to Nelorn and learned about the harassment. Any guilt she might have felt at Kortar's death is gone now, although she won't openly take credit for it.

In order to get Jezen to confess, the Players will have to recognize that her core Value is her desire to be acknowledged for her worth as a scientist. Jezen may not have succeeded at inventing artificial gravity, but she has created a field that can nullify gravity and render massive objects weightless. The greatest obstacle to spaceflight is the energy required to lift spacecraft into orbit against a planetary gravity field, so this innovation will make space travel immensely easier and cheaper and bring the Kalmuri much closer to reaching the stars – even if it will be a while before they can do it without floating inside their ships.

In short, Jezen has achieved an extraordinary, career-making breakthrough – and she can never reveal it to the world, because that would require confessing that she'd used it for murder. Sure, she could wait a decade or so before publishing, but she wouldn't have much of her life left in which to enjoy the accolades. And it's common in science for independent groups to make the same breakthrough within a few years of each other, building on the groundwork that previous scientists have laid. If she waits, someone else may achieve the same breakthrough in the meantime, and the world would never know that she was first. (Once the Players hit upon this approach, the Gamemaster can roleplay Lanox to fill in any parts of this argument that the Players overlook, or to nudge them in the right direction.)

In the end, Jezen realizes that the fame of achieving such an important scientific breakthrough is worth confessing to murder for. She says:

"I may spend the rest of my life in prison, but that's better than spending it in obscurity. Now, my name will forever be attached to the breakthrough that takes the Kalmuri to the stars. Future generations will care far more about that than they will about the deaths of two corrupt men."

SCENE 2: LI AFTERMATH

If Lt. Li was not already found in Act 2, then Jezen will now confess that she abducted him and will reveal where he is being held captive, as well as telling them how to circumvent the security system. She will add, “Don’t worry – Mister Rikeli’s secrets are safe with me. I wouldn’t want anyone to mistakenly infer that I had… outside help in my achievements.”

The rest will play out much like the closing portion of Li’s rescue in Scene 3B, except that the Players will not need to question Li about his abductor, and Li’s medical condition will be relatively worse due to the longer time it took to recover him.

Either way, there should be a concluding scene between T’Zheen and Li, with Li grateful to the Players for his rescue. While T’Zheen admits that recent events have vindicated Li’s strict approach to the Prime Directive, Li reveals that he’s been rethinking his position. These events have proven to him that the Kalmuri are stronger, more resourceful, and better equipped to handle contact with aliens than he’d assumed. Lanox’s successful collaboration with his rescuers has demonstrated that. So he apologizes to T’Zheen, saying she was right to intervene on Nelorn’s behalf.

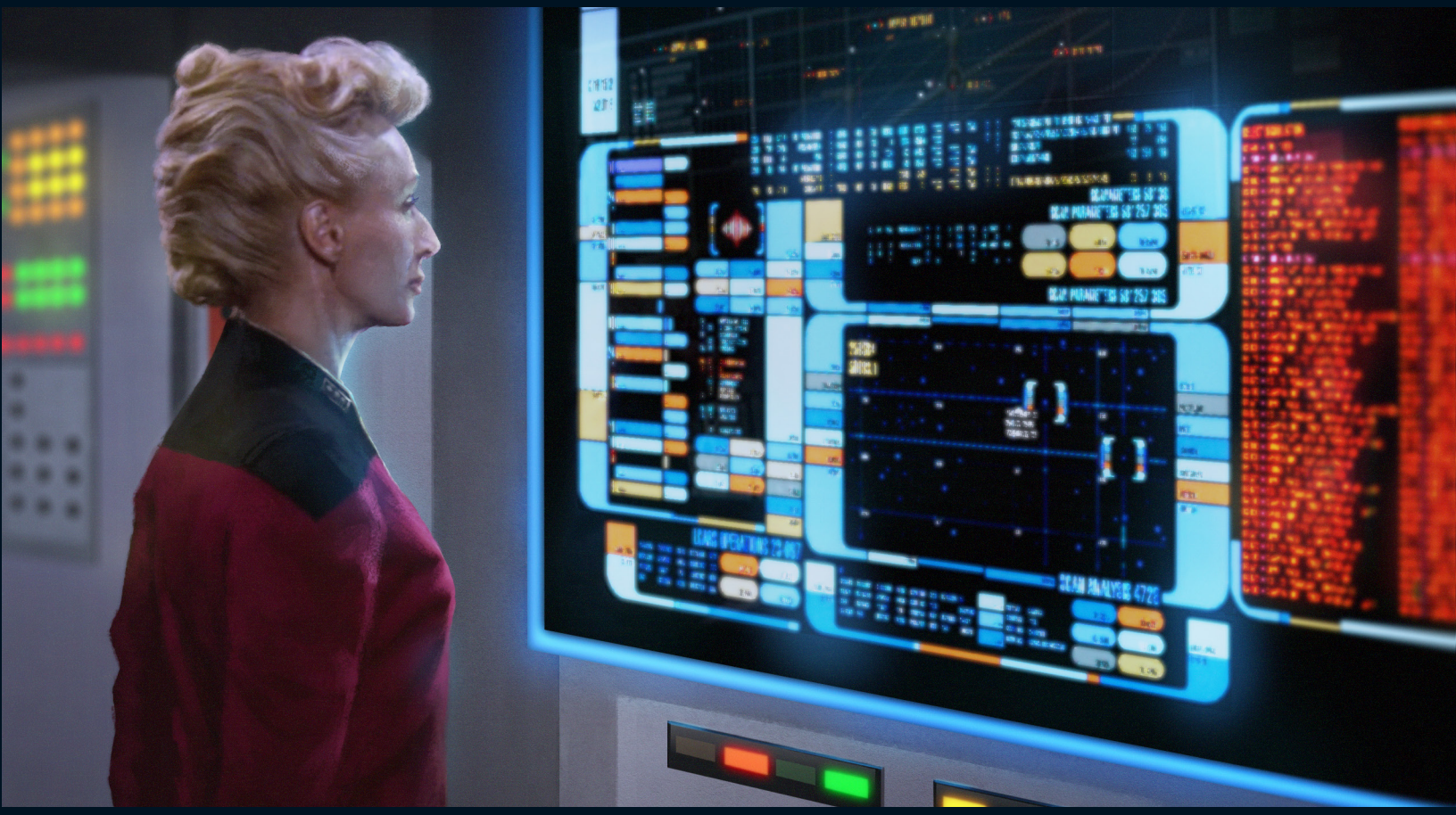
SCENE 3: LANOX WRAPUP

Lanox agrees to keep the crew’s existence secret. She admits she’s gained some appreciation for the Prime Directive:

“It’s like the limits I have to work within to keep me honest – presumption of innocence, respect for a suspect’s rights, making no charges I can’t back up with evidence. Sometimes I know someone is guilty but the law prevents me from acting. That bothers the hell out of me, but I live with it, because I know innocent people would be harmed if those laws didn’t exist.

Still… If your peoples had revealed themselves to the Kalmuri and shared your knowledge years earlier, then these murders might never have happened. All right, all right, that’s probably too harsh. But it might not seem that way to the rest of the Kalmuri if they knew the truth. And someday they will – once we use Jezen’s breakthrough to reach the stars and meet you as peers.

“So tell me – what consequences do you think your non-interference law will have when that day comes?”



CHAPTER
01.50

THE GRAVITY OF THE CRIME
CONCLUSION

Starfleet orders that Dr. Gur's team be removed; they cut things a little close here, and it's best not to take any more chances. Also, there will be an inquiry into Dr. Gur's "immersion" approach and whether it created too much risk. However, it will be up to the Players to decide whether to inform Starfleet Command of Lt. T'Zheen's Prime Directive breach on Nelorn's behalf. If they decide to do so, this could lead into a follow-up story wherein they testify at T'Zheen's inquiry, or Gur's, or both.

Their characters can also take the opportunity to discuss the ethical questions raised by this case and any personal lessons they've learned or Values they've had Challenged.

CONTINUING VOYAGES...

An offbeat option for follow-up adventures would be to play a "spinoff" game about Inspector Lanox as a Player Character solving crimes on Kalmur. Maybe she picks the pocket of one of the Players before they leave and ends up owning a tricorder with a full suite of Federation forensic techniques programmed into it…